

ASSE Ergonomics Tip Sheet

ASSE suggests the following tips aimed at increasing safety and comfort in the workplace and in the home office:

A chair should have a five point star base for stability, an adjustable backrest (angle, height, and depth) that provides lumbar support and an adjustable seat pan (height, forward and backward, and tilt angle). Armrests should be padded, adjustable up and down, in and out and swivel. The edge of the seat pan should be at least four inches from the soft tissue area behind the knee. The chair should adjust in height to allow a greater than 90 degree angle between the trunk and the thigh.

- A document holder that is the same height and distance from the user as the display screen should be provided when the primary task is data entry.
- Keyboards should be detachable and adjustable to allow straight/parallel hand-forearm posture.
- A desk or tabletop should allow legroom for posture adjustments for the seated worker while also providing a 90-degree angle of the elbow and the work surface. The same is also true regarding the elbow angle for the sit/stand and the standing user.
- For lighting and glare the characters on the computer screen should be brighter than the screen background. Bright light sources in the peripheral field of the computer screen should be avoided. The computer screen should be positioned to avoid glare. By adjusting the window shades and moving or tilting the terminal can help avoid glare and screen reflections.
- For posture the head should be tilted 15° forward or less to maintain a vertical position. The elbows should be kept close to the body or supported. The lumbar curve of the back should be maintained. Feet should never be allowed to dangle and should always be supported.
- Dry eye can occur because people tend to blink less when viewing monitors. Due to this, fatigue can also set in.
- In the home office be wary of falls that could occur when reaching high shelves and storage, and tripping on cables, wires, ironing cords, toys, fans, etc.; floor surfaces should be in good condition -- carpets not torn or frayed and be affixed to the floor or have slip resistance pads underneath them; avoid having heated surfaces such as coffee makers, hot plates and portable heaters in the office as they could trigger a fire; be aware that in older homes, the existing electrical circuits may not be able to handle the additional electrical load from fax machines, computers, scanners and other office equipment as well as air conditioning units used explicitly in the office.
- Also, in the home office, if the workstation is to be used by children, ensure that it can be adjusted to the children for reach, seat pan size, chair height and foot support.
- At home, have a licensed/bonded electrician inspect the home electrical system and upgrade it if necessary to assure the current protection and load will meet demands.

At home, develop a fire evacuation plan (such as installing a ladder as an escape route if your office is on the second floor) and move desks closer to power outlets and phone jacks --- or install new outlets. Make sure installed fire extinguishers are acceptable for multiple exposures.

